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TO RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA PRIORITY 2348
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY RESTARTS NUCLEAR
RESEARCH REACTOR

REF: A. A. 07 ANKARA 2755

[1](#)B. B. ISTANBUL 60

[1](#)1. (U) At a ceremony attended by Turkish Energy Minister Guler, the Istanbul Technical University (ITU) restarted its research reactor in a move to kick start Turkey,s drive to develop nuclear energy. The 250 kw TRIGA Mark II reactor resumed operations on March 21 after being closed since 2002 for earthquake retrofitting. The reactor is maintained by the Energy Institute at ITU, who will use it for educational and research proposes. This development coincided with Turkey,s plan to develop commercial nuclear energy. Three days after this ceremony, Guler formally announced tenders for Turkey,s first nuclear power plant (Ankara septel).

[1](#)2. (U) The resumption of the research reactor will provide needed training for indigenous workers for a nascent nuclear energy program. Turkey,s past sporadic attempts to develop nuclear energy have resulted in only a handful of Turkish nuclear physicists. Turkey will be facing a daunting task in filling the demand for qualified engineers especially since the Chamber of Accounts struck out of the nuclear law (reftel a) a provision allowing foreign experts and engineers be used to operate the plant (Ankara septel). At a Nuclear Energy Conference held earlier this year (reftel b), Dr. Necmi Dayday, security inspector for the IAEA and professor at Galatasaray University stated that ITU receives annually only about five applicants for the nuclear physics graduate program, compared to over 100 applicants 20 years ago. The Nuclear Energy Institute also was changed to become simply the Energy Institute in 2003, with nuclear research becoming only a branch of this organization.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Reactor Director, Dr. Ahmet Bayulken, called for Turkey to use indigenous nuclear fuels to avoid depending on foreign sources. This echoes the sentiments of many Turkish speakers at the January Nuclear Energy conference (refetl a) who stressed that Turkey should become more self reliant to boost its energy security. Turkey could potentially tap into its Thorium reserves, rather than obtaining enriched uranium. COMMENT: Avoiding using enriched uranium will greatly influence the reactor choice that Turkey will develop. Reactors that use natural nuclear fuel, such as the Canadian CANDU reactor, will likely become a more attractive choice. In addition, the current law has a 60 percent domestic content prevision and it requires bidders to submit plans for domestic fuel production, while allowing either natural fuel or enriched fuel designs to complete (Ankara septel). END COMMENT.

WIENER